

Time Management for Teens



How do you manage time as a teenager?

It's stressful to feel like you have too much to do and not enough time to do it. Spending a lot of time on things that aren't important to you also leads to stress. Time management can help you feel more in control of how you spend your time. When you feel in control, you reduce your stress. Time management helps you find the time for all the things you want and need to do. It helps you decide which things are urgent and which can wait. Learning how to manage your time, activities, and commitments can be hard. But it can make your life easier, less stressful, and more meaningful.

To make the most of your time and reduce stress:

1. *Prioritize tasks and activities.*

This means you decide which tasks are most important to you.

2. *Control procrastination.*

Procrastination is putting things off until the last minute or missing deadlines because you have waited too long to start or finish something.

3. *Manage commitments.*

A commitment is a promise to do something. To manage commitments, you need to be able to say "no" to things that aren't important to you.

Prioritize

Make a list of all your school, home, and social tasks and activities for the day or week. Then rate these tasks by how important or urgent they are.

- Unimportant tasks are ones that don't need to be done or that aren't important to you, your parents, or your school.
- Important tasks are those that are meaningful or important to you, such as doing well in school, playing computer games with your friends, or practicing guitar. Important tasks are also tasks you must do for others, such as getting your homework or house chores done on time.
- Urgent tasks are those that must be done right away to avoid a major problem. For example, attending appointments to get the care you need or studying for a big test so you get a passing grade. Many urgent things are important things that you put off doing. When things become urgent, they become stressful.



After you have your list and have rated the items, think about how you spend your time. Do you spend a lot of time on things that aren't important? Do your important tasks often become urgent? What can you do to change things? For example, if you study for 30 minutes every night for a few days before a test, you won't have to cram for the test the night before.

Control procrastination.

When you wait until the last minute to do things, you are more likely to stress out. Try these tips:

1. Use your list.

You've made a list of what's important to you. Now get a day planner or notebook to plan your day or week. Write down the important and urgent things you need to do. Write down when you'll do them and how much time you think they'll take. Just writing down what you have to do and seeing it can help you get things done.

2. Find out how long larger projects or tasks will take.

List all the steps you'll need to take to finish the project and how long each step will take. See how much time you have every day for the project. Then count backward from the due date. This is when you'll need to start.

2. Break up large tasks.

Some things take a long time., but you don't always have to do them at one time. For example, if your parents want you to

to wash and vacuum out the car, wash it one day and vacuum it the next. Or if your teacher gives you three chapters to read by the end of the week, read a chapter every day.

3. Know yourself and your habits.

If you know a little about yourself, you can plan your time better. For example, if you can't focus until later in the morning, don't plan to study early in the morning. To get started, ask yourself questions like:

- What time of day am I at my best?
- When do I focus well and feel alert?
- How long does it take me to get ready for school?
- How long can I focus on one thing?
- What grabs my attention? If I study with a radio on, will I be able to do a good job?

Manage your commitments.

You may have a lot going on: school, sports practice, a job, family, and friends. But too many commitments can result in stress.

Let go of some commitments. This doesn't mean giving up. It means that you are learning what's important to you and that you can't do everything.

- Don't commit to things that are not important to you. If you're no longer interested in a certain activity, it might be time to let it go.
- When you want or need to let go of something, imagine tying it to a helium balloon, releasing the balloon, and watching it float away.



• Accept that your life is a "work in progress." You don't have to finish every project or meet every goal in your life by tomorrow or even next week. If one of your goals is less important, you can work on it later in your life.

The perks of good time management.

- Better decision-making skills
- Better performance at work or school
- Increased responsibility & independence
- More opportunities to relax and unwind
- More time with friends and family
- Reduced anxiety when projects are due at school or test dates approach

A word about technology use.

Technology can be a terrible distraction when you need to get things done. But, when used for the right purposes, it can also be tremendously helpful. Use apps, use reminders and notifications, etc.

While the world can be a complicated place, the tools available on your phone can make life much easier than in the days when people used a paper diary or agenda.

A general piece of advice though:
don't let your technology control you.

Most social media apps are created using a math equation (called an "algorithm") designed to steal your time and attention.

Time Management isn't something we're born with.

Time management is such a critical life skill, but for many people it may not come naturally.

The good part is that it can be taught at any age and it will only continue to get easier the more you practice and establish good habits.

So, what are you waiting for? Now's the right time to get started!